

Katy Sellers: Good evening everyone. My name is Katy Sellers, and I work in the Disaster Recovery Program area for the Texas General Land Office, and we are here tonight to go over the State's Action Plan for the wildfire assistance money that we've received from the federal government. I just wanted to lay out the format for the evening. We are going to do a presentation of what the plan is and just give an overview of how we're proposing to use the funding, and then we'll have a time where you can come up and give comments to the plan. We've asked that you fill out one of these cards with your name and information on it if you are going to comment, or even if you don't want to get up publicly and comment, you can fill one of these out and submit it to us. We won't be providing a lot of feedback tonight because we want to take all the comments in and then we'll be putting up comments to the plan on our web site. Also, the plan is on the GLO's web site right now, which is www.glo.texas.gov and you can go there to get all the information that we have available about the wildfires. And we hope to not be here very long and not take up too much of your time. We know it's the evening and everybody's anxious to get home I'm sure, but I will go ahead and introduce everybody who's up here with me. This is Javier Perez. He does the project oversight for the Disaster Recovery Program, so he manages all our construction activities that go on – home building and engineering and those type of activities. Heather Lagrone is our Program Manager. She oversees all the program design and implementation for all the Disaster Recovery activities. And this is Marisa Mason. She's the grant manager that will be overseeing the management of the grant in this particular area. And if you'll just hold all your questions until after Heather finishes her presentation, then we'll open up the floor to take those comments. And without further ado, we'll pass it to Heather.

Heather Lagrone: Thank you. Again, my name is Heather Lagrone. I'm a Program Manager with the General Land Office, and I just want to go through a really quick overview of the Action Plan itself, kind of give you an idea of what it says if you haven't had an opportunity to go to our web site and look at it. Within the Action Plan itself, we have an opportunity for public comment, like Katy mentioned. You can either come and do it verbally, you can write it on the card and hand it to us tonight. You'll have an opportunity to email in any of your comments. We'll take faxes, phone calls, all of those things for the next 10 days, and all of those comments will actually make their way into the action plan itself with a response. So anything that you bring up here, you will see a response to it in the action plan once we get there. Let me just give you a little bit of background about the allocation as a whole. As you're aware, there was a declaration in Texas for the latter part of last year related to wildfires. That declaration included 65 counties, Bastrop County of course being the county that received the majority of that damage. On February 3rd, we received a press release from Department of Housing and Urban Development letting us know that the state of Texas would be allocated an allocation of about \$31 million for wildfire recovery. Within that declaration, we were also told that 80 percent of those funds would be spent in Bastrop County, recognizing the majority of the damage for that declaration to be within Bastrop County. So April the 16th, HUD issued our rules in the federal register that basically defined for us how we would be allowed to use the funds. Based on that, we have developed the action plan that's in front of you today. Again, these funds are made available to us for the wildfire recovery, so any project, be it a house or infrastructure project that we do, will have to have a direct relationship to a wildfire event from the end of last year. So you'll see those types of questions in any of the applications that we ultimately will put out. As I said, the majority of the funds are allocated to Bastrop County. I'm guessing that the majority of you here are here to hear about the Bastrop County allocations, so we'll focus on that but we'll

also touch on the remainder of the funds so that you can get an idea of that as well. When you apply the 80 percent calculation to the \$31 million, that means \$23 million will be spent in Bastrop County for recovery. We've been working with the county since we first heard that this allocation would be coming. In our conversations with the county, we decided that the money would be split, the \$23 million coming to Bastrop County would be split 80 percent going to direct homeowner assistance for housing that was damaged by the wildfires. The remaining 20 percent of the allocation that's made available to the Bastrop County area, the county will be utilizing for infrastructure or what we consider non-housing programs. Potential eligible uses can be things like roads, fire equipment, erosion control, and the county will be applying to the state for the use of those funds. Under the Housing Program, we will be working with homeowners. It will be homeowners who were as I said directly impacted by the wildfire. Eligible activities are going to be either the rehab or reconstruction of stick-built homes. Rehab will be for damages less than \$75,000. If the damages to your home exceed \$75,000, then we will go up to \$125,000 for full reconstruction of your home. As we are looking at your need, we consider things like insurances you may have received. We also consider issues like FEMA funds, SBA loans, anything that you received towards that loss, and all of those allocations or funding sources that you could've received will be netted off of the balance that we can provide to you. It's intended that our program fill a gap if you have a gap in your housing need for the Housing Program. We will go above our caps if you have special circumstances – elevation, if you're in a flood plain, over and above that \$125,000 we can elevate your home to ensure that you're removed from the flood plain or above the flood plain; if you have special ADA type considerations, we will allow you to go above the cap. But generally the caps are \$75,000 for rehab, and \$125,000 if a full reconstruct is necessary. Another issue that we're going to consider is if you're home was completely destroyed and you want to purchase a home in another location, we will consider down payment assistance to allow you assistance towards purchasing a different home in a different site if that's something that you're interested in, and that will be something that we'll be looking at within the application process. To qualify for one of the homes, again, you must have been impacted by the disaster. You have to have a wildfire-related issue, and we're also going to serve individuals who have less than 100 percent of the area median family income. Those numbers are going to be available on our web site. We can give you an idea. It's based on household size. So a family of four making less than 100 percent of the area median income would be eligible for the program; a family of five, it's based on family size. You're also going to have to prove that the home that was damaged was your primary residence. You can do it through tax rolls, you can do it through a driver's license issued in your name at that address, through utility bills at that address in your name – there's various opportunities to prove primary residence. Another issue because it's state funding that we have to assure is that if you have child support that you are required to pay, that you are current on that child support. We cannot help a homeowner that's not current or in a payment plan to become current on child support. We're also going to consider property taxes in a similar way in that we want you to be either current on your property taxes or at least in a payment plan to get current on your property taxes. So those are the eligibility criteria for the individual homeowners. Application intake is probably going to happen late summer. You'll see more information coming up on our web site. We'll be putting together the application process itself and getting all of those details to you as HUD approves the plan. We do intend to use local contractors wherever possible, and as we're using those local contractors, we are putting together a bid process that has already been completed, we've identified the contractors that we plan to use through a competitive process, and those contractors are on board so that we can start assisting you as soon as your applications can be approved. Because these are federal funds though, there are particular restrictions and requirements on the funds. One of those requirements is for an environmental fund release. You have to have an environmental clearance

to allow you to spend these federal dollars. So you'll see us doing things in a prescribed process to ensure that we hit all of those federal requirements to keep you eligible for the program. So the first thing that you'll do is you'll apply to the program. After your application has been fully vetted and we know that we're going to fund you, we'll do an environmental fund release on your particular site. Once that's complete, we can enter into the agreement with the contractor who will actually do the rehab or the reconstruction. The state itself will be responsible for the rehab or reconstruction. We'll have multiple floor plans and things like that for you to select from, but we will be actually hiring the contractor who does the construction on your home. We will ensure that they are up to code, that they meet housing quality standards, that they have visitability considered within the structure and all of the necessary things to bring it to code in your particular area. Again, like I said, application intake is going to be late this summer and you'll see announcements coming out about that. It'll be on our web site. The application forms will be there as well. I'm sure it'll be in the paper, all of those things. Now, flipping to the remaining 20 percent that's available for Bastrop County – it's about \$4.7 million, and that's for that non-housing side that I was talking about. This is the monies that Bastrop County itself will be applying for for infrastructure type needs that the county has resulting from the wildfire, and the county already has a plan for those funds and I know they are very anxious to receive them and get started on that. Same thing is going to apply with their monies. We've got to go through that process that we have to follow for the federal requirements. And again, with the federal requirements, Bastrop County is going to have to do that federal fund release. Once they do that federal fund release, then they can hire the contractors that they're going to utilize for their programs, so on and so forth. I do want to touch just really briefly on the remainder of the funds. There were 65 counties impacted. 64 of those counties are outside of Bastrop County and they will participate in a competitive process for the funding on the non-housing side. That competition is going to consider distress factors. It's going to look at the communities damaged. It's going to look at need. It's going to look at poverty, distress factors as they pertain to the community for disaster-related issues, and we have about \$5.9 million that those 64 counties will individually be competing for. The minimum application on the non-housing, non-Bastrop County side will be a \$200,000 application, and the maximum will be \$1 million. So we've got the \$5.9 million with those caps within it. Generally the plan going forward is to move through the public comment period. Starting today, it will close in 10 days. We'll take public comments here tonight. Tomorrow evening in Tyler, we will take them again via email, via fax, phone calls. All of those are acceptable means of providing public comment. At the end of the 10 days, all of your comments will be gathered. We will actually draft them into the action plan and write a reasoned response to each one of them. Once that's complete, and by June 30th, we will submit the action plan to HUD. HUD, who is the governing entity for these funds, has told us that they will take 45 days to approve the plan. As they are approving the plan, we will be working on the environmental fund release that I talked about earlier. We will be continuing to work with our contractors to ensure that they are ready, and we'll be finalizing your application process. So all of those things will be happening simultaneously. With that, I do want to open it up for public comment. I think we've gotten a couple of cards of folks who wanted to comment. If you haven't turned in a card, we are going to ask you to turn in a card. Like Katy said earlier, if you simply want to provide your comment on this card but not vocalize it from the podium, that's fine as well. We don't intend to necessarily answer your questions tonight from the podium. We will be around after if you have particular questions that we can address for you. The intent of tonight's meeting is to hear from you. So we would really like to hear any questions or concerns or ideas that you have towards how we can improve upon the plan that we've presented.

[NOTE: At this point we took public comments that have been removed and will be posted with the Action Plan responses we submit to HUD]

Katy Sellers: Thank you for your comments. I believe that was all the cards that I received. If nothing else, then as Heather mentioned, we are taking all these comments. The public comment period begins today and stays open for 10 days. We will take all the comments that we've received at this hearing through email – you can also email. It's located on the web site as well. And then our hearing tomorrow night. And then those comments will receive a response that will be part of the action plan we submit to HUD. We will be here after the hearing is over with to mingle with you guys and ask you questions. I know a number of your questions were very specific, and we may not be able to provide you answers here, but that is why we will put the answers online, so hopefully we can address some of your issues that you've raised.

Female: Could you please state the online address?

Katy Sellers: Yes, again, the web site is www.glo.texas.gov and on that web site, there is a disaster recovery tab, and then further, there is a wildfire specific tab on your left hand side. If you have any comments, you can also email them directly to an email address that I can give you. It's gena.hawkins@glo.texas.gov. I can also give you a fax number: 512-447-5329, and all of that is in our action plan that's online as well. So we want to thank all of you for coming out tonight. We are going to try to do everything we can with this funding and we appreciate you being committed to the recovery of this community, and I know that there are a number of people from the county that we've worked with and other community leaders that are very committed to the recovery here and we appreciate everyone's involvement and we look forward to working with you in the future. Thank you very much.

[End of recording]